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ABSTRACT

This teaching guide consists of a biography of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy (Onassis), the wife of President John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States and questions for students to answer after reading the biography. The guide contains activities, such as playing the role of an inquiring camera girl (Mrs. Kennedy's first job in Washington was as an inquiring camera girl for the "Washington Times Herald"); answering 10 questions once asked of Mrs. Kennedy by reporter Helen Thomas; and questions to answer about how Mrs. Kennedy's experiences may have helped her fulfill the role of First Lady. (BT)

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A Biography of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy

By Lisa K. Menéndez Weidman

Growing up

Jacqueline Lee Bouvier was born on July 28, 1929 in Southampton, New York. Her father, John, was a wealthy stockbroker on Wall Street whose family had come from France in the early 1800s. Her mother, Janet, had ancestors from Ireland and England.

Jackie, as they called her, was only a year old when her mother first put her on a horse. Jackie's mother was an accomplished rider and she taught Jackie everything she knew about horses. By the time Jackie was eleven years old she had already won several national championships. The New York Times newspaper wrote about her in 1940:

> *Jacqueline Bouvier, an eleven year old equestrienne from East Hampton, Long Island, scored a double victory in the horsemanship competition. Miss Bouvier achieved a rare distinction. The occasions are few when a young rider wins both contests in the same show.*

Jackie liked all kinds of animals, and there were many pets in the Bouvier family, including a white rabbit, a white bull terrier, a dachshund, and a Dalmatian. Her first pet was a Scottish terrier named Hootchie.

Remembering her childhood, Jackie recalled: 'I hated dolls, loved horses and dogs and had skinned knees and braces on my teeth....'

Jackie also enjoyed reading. Before she even started school she had read all the children's books on her bookshelves. She'd even snuck into the guest bedroom to read some of her parents' books! Other times, when she was supposed to be taking a nap she would sit on the windowsill reading, making sure to scrub any dirt off her feet so the nanny would not see she'd been out of bed. Her heroes were Mowgli from the *Jungle Book*, Robin Hood, Little Lord Fauntleroy's grandfather, the poet Byron, and Scarlett O'Hara.

When Mrs. Bouvier thought about her daughter's talents , she wondered if Jackie might one day be a writer. When Jackie was ten years old she wrote a poem, which she titled, 'Sea Joy':

> When I go down by the sandy shore
> I can think of nothing I want more
> Than to live by the booming blue sea
> As the seagulls flutter round about me
> I can run about when the tide is out
> With the wind and the sand and the sea all about

And the seagulls are swirling and diving for fish.
Oh – to live by the sea is my only wish.

Going to School

Jackie at Miss Chapin's School in New York City.

After kindergarten, Jackie started the first grade at Miss Chapin's School on East End Avenue in New York. One of her teachers, Miss Platt, thought Jackie was 'a darling child, the prettiest little girl; very clever; very artistic, and full of the devil. She was efficient and finished her work on time and then had nothing to do until her classmates finished theirs....' At times Jackie did get into mischief and would be sent to the headmistress, Miss Ethel Stringfellow, who wrote on her report card: 'Jacqueline was given a D in Form because her disturbing conduct in her geography class made it necessary to exclude her from the room.'

Jackie's life changed when her parents divorced. She was ten years old. It was a very difficult time for her, especially because there were not many children who had divorced parents. Jackie also came from a Catholic family, and the Catholic Church disapproves of divorces. Jackie had always been a private person, but now she became more quiet, keeping her thoughts to herself.

Still, despite these hard times, Jackie had many advantages and opportunities in her life. She learned how to ballroom dance and took classical ballet lessons in the old Metropolitan Opera House. She also began taking lessons in French, and she became quite good at it by practicing speaking at the dinner table as part of a game her mother invented. In 1942, when Jackie was about to turn thirteen, her mother married a man in the oil business named Hugh Auchincloss. He'd been married before too and had children. Besides her younger sister, Lee, Jackie now had two step-brothers, Yusha and Tommy, and a step-sister, Nina.

Jackie graduated in June 1947 from Miss Porter's School, a boarding school for adolescent girls in Connecticut. She continued her education at Vassar College in New York, where she studied history, literature, art, and French. One day during her sophomore year, Jackie saw a notice on a bulletin board about a junior year exchange program in Paris, France. She applied and was accepted to start the following academic year. Jackie lived with the de Renty family at 76 Avenue Mozart in Paris. Madame de Renty had two daughters, Claude and Ghislaine, and one four-year-old son, Christian. Jackie later wrote about her experience:

Jackie (top left) and family

> I loved it more than any year of my life. Being away from home gave me a chance to look at myself with a jaundiced eye. I learned not to be ashamed of a real hunger for knowledge, something I had always tried to hide, and I came home glad to start in here again but with a love for Europe that I am afraid will never leave me.

She returned to the United States to finish up her last year of college at George Washington University instead of Vassar College because she preferred being in the city and close to her family. After graduating, Jackie went back to Europe, this time with her sister, Lee. Jackie and Lee had a lot of fun and decided that they would keep a journal of their trip to give as a gift to their mother. It really was the perfect gift, with all the humorous pictures they drew alongside their tales of adventure.

Jacqueline Bouvier: The Inquiring Photographer

Jackie came back from her European vacation and started her first job in the Fall of 1951 as the 'Inquiring Camera Girl' for the *Washington Times-Herald* newspaper. Her job was to go around the city of Washington asking citizens questions on the issues of the day, which she would later write up in her newspaper column.

September 12, 1953. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy and John F. Kennedy at their wedding reception at Hammersmith Farm.

During this time Jackie met John F. Kennedy, who was a Congressman and soon to be elected a Senator from Massachusetts. On September 12, 1953 they married at St. Mary's Church in Newport, Rhode Island. Twelve hundred people were invited to the wedding reception at Hammersmith Farm, a place filled with happy memories for Jacqueline of the summers she had spent there with her mother, stepfather, brothers and sisters.

After the wedding, the Kennedys returned to Washington D.C. Unfortunately, early on in their marriage, Senator Kennedy suffered crippling pain in his back from a wartime injury and he had two operations. While recovering from surgery, Mrs. Kennedy encouraged him to write a book about several U.S. senators who had risked their careers to fight for the things in which they believed. The book, called *Profiles in Courage*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1957. That same year, the Kennedys' first child, Caroline, was born.

In January 1960, Senator John F. Kennedy announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States. He began working very long hours and traveling all around the country. A few weeks into her husband's campaign for President, Jackie learned that she was pregnant and her doctors instructed her to remain at home. From home Jackie helped her husband, answering thousands of campaign letters, taping TV commercials, giving interviews and writing a weekly newspaper column, 'Campaign Wife', which was distributed across the country. In the general election on November 8th 1960, John F. Kennedy beat Republican Richard M. Nixon in a very close race. Before his inauguration, Mrs. Kennedy gave birth to their second child, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jr.

Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy: First Lady of the United States

On January 20, 1961, John Fitzgerald Kennedy took the oath office to become the nation's 35th President. At age thirty-one, Jacqueline Kennedy was now First Lady. With her gracious personal style and her passion for history and the arts she worked hard to be worthy of her new role. While she had a deep sense of obligation to her country, her first priorities were to be a good wife to her

husband and mother to her children. One time she told a reporter that 'if you bungle raising your children nothing else much matters in life'.

Restoring the White House

Mrs. Kennedy soon set about making the White House into a real home for her family. She turned the sun porch on the third floor into a kindergarten school for Caroline and twelve to fifteen other children, who came every day beginning at 9:30 in the morning. There was also a swimming pool, a swing set, and a tree-house outside on the White House lawn where Caroline and John, Jr would play. Along with making it into a home for her family, Mrs. Kennedy also thought about what the White House represented to the many visitors who came through the building each day and to citizens everywhere. She wanted people to have a greater appreciation of the fascinating history of America's most famous residence, and of past presidents. Her first major project as First Lady was to restore and preserve the White House as a beautiful place that truly reflected America's history. She knew this would take a lot of work and that she would need the help and expertise of many professionals. She began reading books which showed how the White House looked long ago and created a White House Fine Arts Committee and the post of White House curator. Gathering the finest art and furniture from around the United States (including many items that had belonged to former presidents and their families), she restored all the public rooms in the White House. CBS Television asked Mrs. Kennedy to present a televised tour of the newly restored White House. Fifty million Americans watched it on television. Mrs. Kennedy was honored with an Emmy Award for her hard work.

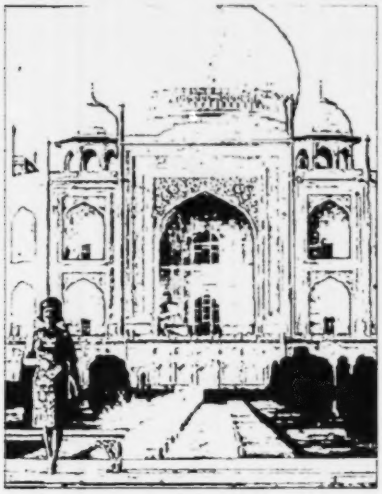
Mrs. Kennedy and Caroline with classmate in the White House school, May 24, 1963

Promoting the arts

President Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy together with their two children, brought a new, youthful spirit to the White House, which they believed should be a place to celebrate American history, culture, and achievement. As First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy planned important dinners and events at the White House and invited artists, writers, scientists, poets, and musicians to mingle with politicians, diplomats, and statesmen. One time she invited the world-renowned violinist, Isaac Stern. After his visit to the White House he wrote to Mrs. Kennedy to thank her. 'It would be difficult to tell you', he wrote, 'how refreshing, how heartening it is to find such serious attention and respect for the arts in the White House. To many of us it is one of the most exciting developments on the present American cultural scene'. Mrs. Kennedy also influenced the world of fashion. Her unique and refined sense of style made her a trend-setter, although she discouraged the excessive focus on her appearance by magazines, newspapers and the general public.

White House, 1962. Jacqueline Kennedy, President Kennedy, Mme. Malraux, and violinist Isaac Stern at a dinner reception in honor of Andre Malraux, French Minister of Cultural Affairs.

Mrs. Kennedy: Ambassador of Good Will



Mrs. Kennedy in front of the Taj Mahal in India, March 15, 1962.

Mrs. Kennedy also traveled with her husband, representing the United States in other countries. Clark Clifford, a respected lawyer and advisor to President Kennedy, was so pleased with Mrs. Kennedy after her trip to Paris, Vienna, and Greece that he wrote her in a thank you note that she had rendered the most magnificent service to her country. 'Once in a great while,' he said, 'an individual will capture the imagination of people all over the world. You have done this; and what is more important, through your graciousness and tact, you have transformed this rare accomplishment into an incredibly important asset to this nation.'

As First Lady she also traveled to Italy, India, and Pakistan. In India Mrs. Kennedy visited the Taj Mahal, the seventeenth century palace built to commemorate the Emperor's beloved queen, Mumtaz Mahal. Mrs. Kennedy was so impressed by the beauty of the Taj that she decided to return that night to admire it by moonlight. Her interest in other cultures and her ability to speak several foreign languages, including French, Spanish, and Italian, made her well-known and beloved around the world.

A Time of Loss

On August 7, 1963 Mrs. Kennedy gave birth to their third child, Patrick Bouvier Kennedy. He suffered from a serious lung ailment, and was rushed to the Children's Hospital in Boston. Patrick died two days later, and Mr. And Mrs. Kennedy grew closer as they grieved the death of their son. Sadly, another tragedy befell her as she was still recovering from this terrible loss. On November 22, 1963, President Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy were in Dallas, Texas. As their car drove slowly past cheering crowds, shots rang out. President Kennedy was killed and Jacqueline Kennedy became a widow at age thirty-four. She planned the President's state funeral, which was watched by millions around the world who shared her grief and admired her courage and dignity.

Soon after President Kennedy's death she began working to organize the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum as a memorial to her husband. She chose the architect I.M. Pei to design a building overlooking Boston Harbor.

Several years later, in 1968, Jacqueline Kennedy married a wealthy Greek man in the shipping business named Aristotle Onassis. They were married for eight years until Mr. Onassis died from an illness in 1975. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis became a widow a second time. Now that her children were older, she decided to find work that would be fulfilling. Since she had always enjoyed writing and literature, Jacqueline accepted a job offer as an editor at Viking Press in New York city. She enjoyed a successful career in publishing until her death on May 19, 1994. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis was laid to rest beside President Kennedy in Arlington National Cemetery outside Washington, D.C.

The legacy of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy

Jacqueline Kennedy, throughout her life, sought to preserve and protect America's cultural heritage. You can see the results of her hard work when you walk through Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C. While she was First Lady, she helped to stop the destruction of Lafayette Square, because she knew that these buildings were an important part of the nation's capital and played an essential role in its history. Later, in New York City, she led a campaign to save and renovate Grand Central Station, a beautiful, historic railroad station. Today, more than 500,000 people each day pass through it, and can enjoy its full beauty, thanks to her restoration efforts.

Many people will always remember how she captivated the attention of this nation and the rest of the world with her intelligence, beauty, and grace. With a deep sense of devotion to her family and country she dedicated herself to raising her children and to making the world a better place through art, literature, and a respect for history.

Who was Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy?

Imagine that you could travel back in time to see Jacqueline Kennedy at different stages of her life. What would you learn about her? (Read the biography of Jacqueline Kennedy for helpful clues)

1. **As a girl, what were Jackie's favorite activities?**

2. **Name one experience that was important to Jackie as a young woman, before her marriage to John F. Kennedy. Why was it important?**

3. **As First Lady of the United States, describe any one thing that Jacqueline Kennedy accomplished that you consider important.**

Jacqueline Bouvier: The Inquiring Camera Girl

Directions: In 1951 Jacqueline took her first job as the 'Inquiring Camera Girl' for the Washington Times-Herald newspaper. Jackie's job was to go around the city of Washington asking citizens questions on the issues of the day. Jacqueline Bouvier asked questions like the ones below. Pair up with one of your classmates and ask each other these questions. Write down your partner's answers in the spaces provided.

The person I interviewed is: _____

1. What is the greatest need in the world today?_____

_____

_____

2. If you could be reincarnated*, who would you be? Why?_____

_____

_____

3. Would you like to be famous?Why? _____

_____

_____

4. What person's death affected you most?Why?_____

_____

_____

* Reincarnated means to be born again as someone else or something else.

The roles of a First Lady: Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy

Section I. Directions: A reporter named Helen Thomas once asked Jacqueline Kennedy the ten questions you see below. Read this questionnaire and answer the questions that follow in section II.

Q: What are the things you enjoy most about living in the White House?
A: Seeing my husband be a great President.

Q: How far along are you in the executive mansion restoration project?
A: All rooms done, except for a couple of 3rd floor guest rooms. Now we relax and look for great paintings or objects of historical significance…and work on filling the library with appropriate books.

Q: What do you hope to achieve in the next two years as first lady?
A: Peace and privacy with my children.

Q: You have scored brilliantly as a White House hostess. What is your favorite way of entertaining? For how many, etc.
A: 8 people seated dinner.

Q: Who is your favorite president's wife of the past?
A: Bess Truman – because she brought a daughter to the White House at a most difficult age and managed to keep her from being spoiled so that she found a happy life married with children. Mrs. Truman kept her family close together in spite of White House demands and that is the hardest thing to do – and in my opinion the most important.

Q: Why do you attend so few political functions with the President?
A: The official side of my life takes me away from my children enough. If I were to add political duties I would have practically no time with them. They are my first responsibility. My husband agrees with this. If he wanted me to come I would.

Q: You have become known in the country as a skilled sportswoman. What is your favorite sport?
A: To be out in the air away from details – that is why I like to ride [horses] – not for fox hunting just to be with nature.

Q: If you had it to do all over again, would you like to be an inquiring photographer?
A: Yes. I learned so much about people.

Q: How do you feel about the press coverage of your activities?
A: The press helped restoration immensely, but private activities are overemphasized.

Q: What do you think of the public response to your restoration project?
A: Gratifying – because I worked harder on it than I ever have on anything.

Section II. Directions: Refer to the questionnaire on the previous page and answer the following questions.

1. Of all the things Mrs. Kennedy wanted to accomplish as First Lady, what does she say mattered to her most of all?

_____

_____

4. What did she say she wanted most for her children?

_____

Why do you think having privacy with her children might have been difficult in the White House?

_____

_____

3. What did Mrs. Kennedy do to restore the White House to make it a beautiful place that reflected America's history?

_____

_____

_____

4. Why was the restoration of the White House such an important accomplishment for her?

_____

_____

_____

Who will you be?

What experiences do you think may have helped Jacqueline Kennedy fulfill the role of First Lady so well? (Clue: Think about her family, where she went to school, what her interests and talents were, etc.)

What about you? What do you like to do?

What do you want to do when you grow up? Do you want a career? A family? Both?

What, if anything, would you need to do to prepare yourself to do well at the things you described in the question above?

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